are on 2-Year Leave without Pay/Allowances/PLI extendable upto 5 years; and (v) Government servants/others on deputation. The scheme is effective from February 24 to April 25, 2003 or till such time the Management deem fit on the basis of the response to the scheme. It is expected that about 1000 employees will avail of VRS under the scheme. The financial burden likely to be faced by Air India would be about Rs. 57 crores (approx.) for different categories.

Direct flights to the USA and Europe

2635. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Air India is planning to undertake a major fleet expansion by acquiring eight aircrafts on lease to operate direct flights to the USA and Europe from various destinations in our country;

(b) if so, whether Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. has requested the Centre to ensure that adequate number of flights by Air India from Hyderabad are planned to the USA and Europe while finalising the bilaterals with countries concerned as a very large number of professionals from Andhra Pradesh are working in the USA and Europe;

(c) if so, whether Government would agree to the request; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) Air India has dry leased 9 A310-300 aircraft and one B747-400 aircraft to undertake flights for growth as well as to replace its own old aircrafts like B747-200 and A300-B4. Air India is also in the process of dry leasing 10th and 11th A310 in 2003. Air India has introduced three flights a week from India to New York *via* Paris w.e.f. 3rd December, 2002. A fourth frequency has been added w.e.f. 30th March, 2003.

In addition, Air India has recommended thrice weekly operations to Frankfurt w.e.f. December, 2002.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) At present, Hyderabad Airport is not equipped to handle B747 aircraft which are being deployed by Air India to operate its services to USA. However, Air India serves the Hyderabad-US West Coast market through code share flights over the Pacific. Pssengers can travel between Hyderabad and Singapore on Air India's own direct services as also on Air India's code share services with Silk Air, with convenient connections onward to the US West Coast and on Air India's code share flights with Singapore on the Singapore/ Los Angeles sector. Air India can also carry passengers between Hyderabad and Los Angeles over Kuala Lumpur on its code share on Malayasia Airlines Flights Hyderabad-Kuala Lumpur-Los Angeles sector.

Modernisation of Amritsar Airport

2636. SHRI SUKHBIR SINGH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the status of Amritsar Airport at present;

(b) whether Government propose to modernise Amritsar Airport at par with International Airports; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the amount of funds spent so far on this and the funds to be allocated for the said project in the Tenth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) At present, Amritsar airport has runway length of 9150 feet. Customs and Immigration facilities are available there for operation of International flights. Terminal building can handle 200 passengers, and apron can accommodate two AB - 320 and one B - 737 aircraft. Airport is